

We Are A Nation at War

Chairman Pete Hoekstra, R-Mich.

The seemingly endless stream of leaks in Washington poses a growing and insidious threat to U.S. national security. Far from missing the forest for the trees, the clear issue at hand is our ability to conduct the nation's secret business in secret.

The reality is, we are a nation at war. The recent attacks in Jordan serve as a potent reminder that terrorists continue to target us and our allies, and that they have a wanton disregard for innocent civilians or the sanctity of human life.

As a nation war, it is imperative we protect vital information from our enemies especially that which pertains to our information sources, methods and allies. But the fact that some things happen in secret does not mean our government has carte-blanche to act recklessly or that oversight is not happening.

The House Intelligence Committee, and our Senate counterpart, is responsible for overseeing the agencies that comprise the U.S. Intelligence Community. For obvious reasons, much of our oversight work cannot be done publicly. But The 21 members of this committee recognize every day the awesome grant of trust that has been invested in us by our colleagues and the American people.

We are responsible for ensuring the activities of the Intelligence Community adhere to U.S. law and our international treaty obligations. For those in doubt, I want to make it clear: it is against U.S. law and treaty obligation to engage in torture. In instances where abuse can be proved, people have been charged, including five soldiers last week.

But just as we expect our forces in the field to obey applicable laws, we should expect those who hold security clearances in Washington to obey the laws that apply to their clearances. People who leak classified information are in no uncertain terms breaking the law, and they should be punished as such. In the end, this is not a case about the public's right to know, but the responsibility of those who hold a security clearance to protect and uphold the public's trust.

Pete Hoekstra is Chairman of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and Represents Michigan's Second Congressional District